

FONSI CO-120-2004-14 EA

The environmental assessment analyzing the environmental effects of the Proposed Action has been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

DECISION RECORD CO-120-2004-14 EA

INTRODUCTION: This document explains my decision and rationale for the designation of roads and trails on public lands in the Wolford Mountain Project Area administered by the Kremmling Field Office. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for the project, in conjunction with the regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to determine if the Proposed Action and any of the Alternatives to the Proposed Action might cause significant environmental effects to the area's resources.

The decision and finding which follows below are based on the EA, and the management goals and objectives for the project area as documented in the 1984 Kremmling Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP), and confirmed by the project Interdisciplinary Team during the EA process.

This decision, which follows through on the RMP to designate routes for this area is an RMP Maintenance Action. Therefore a Plan Amendment is not necessary and the existing RMP will be updated to incorporate the decision.

The Administrative Record, including the EA which discusses and analyzes the Proposed Action and Alternatives, is available for review at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kremmling Field Office, 2103 E. Park Avenue, Kremmling, Colorado. The EA is available electronically in pdf format at the Kremmling web site at: www.co.blm.gov/kra/kraindex.htm. Please direct questions about this Decision Record/FONSI or the EA to Dennis Gale, NEPA Coordinator, at (970) 724-3005.

BACKGROUND: The 33,152 acre portion of BLM public lands which comprise the project area is currently ‘open’ to off route OHV travel. In 1984 this area, referred to in the RMP as the “Resource Conservation Area” was chosen for a “Limited to Designated Roads and Trails” ORV designation (see Kremmling RMP Record of Decision, Pg 12, Table 2-1). An “ORV Implementation Plan” was prepared in 1988 to inventory existing roads and trails and follow through with the RMP direction; however, lack of adequate funding and other BLM priorities prevented the field office from completing the inventory, and the required site-specific environmental assessment to analyze the impacts of any proposed route designations. A concerted effort to inventory the roads and trails in the project area was begun in 2001 and completed in 2004.

The Proposed Action is to designate the inventoried routes within the Wolford Mountain project area for motorized and non-motorized use, and manage this use through various actions which include mapping, signing, visitor information, education, monitoring, and law enforcement where necessary.

DECISION: It is my decision to implement the travel management plan for route designations as contained in the Proposed Action for the Wolford Mountain Project Area, including the mitigation, monitoring and compliance actions noted below. Implementation of this decision shall be accomplished in accordance with an implementation plan, reviewed and updated annually. The implementation plan for 2005 is included as Attachment A to this decision.

Included in my decision are a few minor changes to the route designations chosen by the project’s Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). These changes are the result of closer field review and additional comments from staff, local users, permittees, etc. The changes are all minor, have been reviewed with the IDT, and do not require additional analysis. They are included as Attachment B to this decision.

In some years the annual accomplishments may be limited by allocated funds. Although this decision implements a number of actions analyzed in the EA, this travel plan shall be considered ***adaptable*** and subject to modification in the future should changes in policy, resource management, new information or improved technology, method of travel, or funding levels warrant such modification. Where modification is necessary, proposed changes shall be analyzed at the appropriate NEPA level. This decision shall not be considered a substitute for site-specific environmental assessment for projects where such an assessment is needed to adequately analyze the impacts of the project on any resource within the project area.

The Summary Description of the Proposed Action is included on Page 1 of the EA, and a more detailed description is included on Page 15. The Proposed Action provides for 167 miles of motorized use, with specific designations as follows:

- 105 miles of Open-Limited routes are designated for all motorized and non-motorized users during the summer use period. Of these 105 miles, 2.6 miles are subject to an annual seasonal closure to provide protection for Greater sage-grouse during the critical springtime breeding period. About 2.3 miles of motorcycle trail across the summit of Wolford Mountain will be closed to motorcycle use from September 15 through May 31 each year to provide for “quiet-use” by non-motorized users, and to protect raptors during critical springtime nesting periods.

- 16 miles of ATV routes are designated primarily for ATVs, but also available for any motorized or mechanized vehicle under 50” in width, plus horseback riders and hikers.
- 17 miles of Motorcycle routes are designated for use primarily by motorcycle users but also available for use by bicycles, horses, and hikers.
- 29 miles are designated for motorized use for authorized (administrative) use. These routes are also available for all non-motorized users.

The Proposed Action also provides for the following non-motorized uses:

- Unrestricted hiking and jogging use throughout the project area with 1 mile of foot trail designated for hiking or jogging use only.
- Unrestricted horseback riding use is available throughout the project area except for the Cretaceous Ammonite ACEC which is designated for hiking use only.
- 69 miles of routes designated closed to motorized use are available for hiking, jogging and horseback riding use.
- 2.3 miles of scenic trail are reserved each spring and fall for hiking, jogging, mountain biking and horseback riding use on the slopes and summit of Wolford Mountain, during a time period when this trail is closed to motorcycle use.
- 138 miles of routes designated for motorized use are available for hiking, jogging, mountain bike or horseback riding use.
- 29 miles designated for administrative motorized use are available for hiking, jogging, mountain biking, and horseback riding use.

The maps showing the final designations for the routes in the project area are included as *Attachment C: Final Route Designations – Summer*, and *Attachment D: Final Route Designations – Winter*.

RATIONALE: The travel management plan confirmed in this decision will provide for a manageable mix of motorized and non-motorized uses. It addresses the key issues developed from internal and external scoping and meetings, and provides a route system which will meet or maintain the project area’s management goals and objectives. The plan was developed with careful consideration of BLM travel management strategies and policies, and subjected to a thorough analysis of potential impacts to the area’s resources and the route system’s effect on public land health standards. The plan completes the long-overdue designation of routes called for in the 1984 RMP. The decision is based on the findings and analysis completed by the Interdisciplinary Team in the Environmental Assessment process, including supporting documentation and reports, and the extensive public participation and workshops held throughout the process.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

Mitigation Measures Common to all Resources: The proposed action shall be adapted to provide the appropriate response to protect the project area's natural and cultural resources. Best management practices such as, but not limited to, closures, relocations, drainage improvements, hardening, change in motorized use, seeding, etc. shall be promptly implemented when monitoring or field reviews indicate such action is appropriate.

Routine law enforcement shall be conducted to check user compliance with route designations, seasonal closures, noise level requirements, and to ensure that the project area's natural and cultural resources are protected.

Cultural Resources: Implementation of the Proposed Action shall be done in accordance with the Final Programmatic Agreement included in Appendix 4 of the EA.

An intensive survey, testing, salvage and mitigation program shall be included in the annual project implementation plan.

For mapping and signing efforts, particularly at information kiosks, the cultural program will develop appropriate information, education and legal penalties language to be included in all hand outs, maps and kiosks.

Invasive, Non-Native Species: During reclamation periods when closed and physically-reclaimed roads are more susceptible to weed invasion and spread the BLM Kremmling Field Office will ensure that invasive species are located, mapped and controlled. This may be accomplished through cooperative efforts with the Grand County Department of Natural Resources.

All projects within the project area which will result in soil disturbance must include a requirement for the use of weed free equipment. Equipment shall be cleaned and inspected prior to being brought onto any project within the project area.

Public education and signs, promoting the use of clean vehicles on public land and recreation user responsibility in preventing the spread of weeds, shall be installed at entry areas.

Migratory Birds: Sagebrush shall be included in all seed mixes used to reclaim routes designated for closure.

If monitoring of active raptor nests in the project area indicates impacts are occurring due to motorized or non-motorized use, changes in route designation, location, and/or season of use may be required to protect raptors during the nesting season.

The Colorado Bird Observatory shall be contracted to continue monitoring migratory species of concern that depend on the sagebrush ecosystem. Areas where bird population measurements were made in the past will be re-measured to determine changes in species composition, population numbers, and nesting success of important species in the sagebrush habitat type.

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species: To improve Greater sage-grouse habitat, a mix of grasses, forbs, and sagebrush seed shall be used to reclaim all roads and trails identified for closure.

The field office shall coordinate all future travel management activities with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) if such activities could impact sage-grouse.

Water Quality, Surface and Ground Water: Annual Implementation and Monitoring Plans shall identify acreage to be physically disturbed by either construction or closure. The entire project's projected disturbance acreage shall be reviewed and any needed stormwater coordination formalized at that time.

Reclamation of closed roads shall be prioritized by the potential to impact water quality. Coordination with Grand County will be necessary if county roads are impacting water quality.

An upland gate shall be installed at a selected location above Cow Gulch, to effectively close existing alternate motorized access to the floodplain area of the gulch.

Wetland and Riparian Zones: Route impacts to wetland or riparian systems shall be high priority areas for implementing designated closures, or best management practices.

Route closure actions shall incorporate measures to restore any wetland areas, and include appropriate Section 404 permits.

If monitoring indicates that concentrated motorized use in the Horse Gulch 'Play Area' is negatively impacting the gulch, additional mitigation, and modifications to route designations may be necessary. These actions may include further restricting the gulch crossing from ATV use to motorcycles, closing the crossing, armoring the crossing, reducing the size of the 'Play Area', or closing trails that have become 'take off' points to the gulch.

Soils: Strict enforcement and maintenance of closures shall be conducted to protect soil resources.

Steep slopes, poor soil site (example- Cryorthents) areas, and wetland areas shall be priorities for reclaiming closed routes.

Access and Realty Authorizations: Letters shall be sent to holders of rights-of-way that were not provided a prior designation of administrative access. These letters shall include the requirement for the holders to coordinate with the field office prior to conducting any permitted maintenance activities during the winter seasonal closure.

Noise: An annual noise level testing workshop shall be initiated and conducted in local schools and other selected locations to bring motorized users into compliance with current noise level requirements.

Paleontological Resources: A route proposed for construction near CR 227 will need to be carefully located to avoid a Cretaceous vertebrate site.

Transportation: Signs shall be installed, maintained, or replaced on all routes to indicate whether they are open, limited or closed.

Maintenance standards and priorities shall be developed to assure that routes are maintained appropriately and timely. Routes will be maintained to the width necessary for the designated mode of travel.

Agreements shall be developed with volunteer groups and individuals to provide maintenance and construction assistance.

The field office shall coordinate and cooperate with Grand County Road and Bridge Department to mitigate resource concerns on segments of county road which provide access to the project area.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING:

Cultural Resources: Compliance monitoring for the cultural program will require site specific evaluations of base line impacts, and a suite of escalating treatment measures to protect, preserve or mitigate the cultural sites depending on the level of direct and indirect impacts.

An intensive monitoring program shall be included in the annual monitoring plan for the project area.

A table of known cultural sites that are in potential jeopardy from direct impacts of OHV use, and a suite of management and mitigation options is presented in Appendix 3 of the EA. Treatment options are presented as a sliding scale with treatments ranging from signing and monitoring, to fencing and emergency road closure, to testing, salvage, and mitigation. Once on the ground monitoring is implemented and base line data established, treatment options will reflect the degree of past, current and anticipated impacts. Implementation of the project decision will require flexible, adaptive management to accommodate new information and changing environmental use impacts.

Threatened and Endangered Species: Existing Osterhout milkvetch (*Astragalus osterhoutii*) populations will be monitored in the project area to ensure compliance with closures, to monitor the status of known populations, and to ensure searches for new populations continue in the future. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with methods and techniques included in the *Astragalus osterhoutii* Population Monitoring Plan, on file in the Kremmling Field Office.

The field office will coordinate with the CDOW and the Middle Park Sage-Grouse Working Group to locate new strutting grounds (leks) and to monitor historic ones annually to determine any renewed use of them by sage-grouse. Changes in strutting ground use or the location of new ones would require modification of the approved travel management plan to assure the continued protection of sage-grouse.

Terrestrial Wildlife: Measurements will be made to determine success of road and trail closures and success of re-vegetation. Native grass, forb, and shrub species will be used to reclaim closed areas and a suitable technique will be developed by field office resource specialists to measure success of re-vegetation efforts. The vegetative requirements of sagebrush dependent wildlife will be incorporated in the re-vegetation measurement objectives and the techniques used to determine success.

Special habitat features including cliffs, rocky outcrops, and large, mature conifer and cottonwood trees that occur in the project area will be observed annually to determine nesting use by birds of prey including golden eagles, bald eagles, and northern goshawks.

The field office shall contract with the Colorado Bird Observatory to conduct migratory songbird population counts in the project area in key sagebrush habitat.

Soils, Water Quality, Riparian/Wetlands: Current monitoring of riparian zone conditions will be continued. Monitoring will include some stream cross sections, photo points, and monitoring wells. Additional sites will be added at stream crossings. The motorcycle crossing in Cow Gulch will be monitored annually for stream protection needs.

Monitoring of the project area will occur yearly, with a focus on riparian areas and routes located in erosive soils. Monitoring will include road width, condition, and observable use trends. Current water quality monitoring in the project area will also be continued.

Monitoring will be conducted in wetland areas with route crossings, and where routes occur within a 100 foot buffer zone of riparian areas. This monitoring will be done in addition to the existing riparian monitoring in the area.

Non-motorized trails will also be monitored within riparian/wetland zones.

The Horse Gulch 'Play Area' will be monitored for potential impacts to the gulch from concentrated motorized use.

Closed routes shall be prioritized for reclamation. Those routes which are stable and allowed to naturally revegetate shall be routinely checked, to determine if natural revegetation is occurring or additional actions are needed to stabilize the route or help revegetate it.

Current water quality monitoring, which includes stream stability and chemical analyses, shall continue. Additional stations shall be added if review indicates that this monitoring would help identify road impacts.

Monitoring of ephemeral drainages shall be conducted where routes traverse the drainage, or parallel the drainage to determine extent of soil erosion and route condition.

Vegetation: A vegetation monitoring program was implemented in conjunction with issuance of the Kremmling Resource Management Plan in December 1984. This monitoring program shall continue to be followed with implementation of the Wolford Mountain Travel Management Plan.

APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES: Within 30 days of receipt of this decision, you have the right of appeal to the Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.400. Appeal and stay procedures are outlined in Form CO-050-1840-191. Appeals must be made in reference to specific route designations and other decisions made in this Decision Record.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ John F. Ruhs
John F. Ruhs
Field Manager
Kremmling Field Office

DATE SIGNED: 1/24/05

Attachments:

- A: Implementation Plan for 2005
- B: Changes to Proposed Action Route Designations
- C: Final Route Designations – Summer
- D: Final Route Designations – Winter

ATTACHMENT A

Implementation Plan for 2005

Implementation Action	Benefitting Resource Program(s)	Location	Scheduled Start	Scheduled Completion	Fund Source
Install 3 kiosks, sign all designated routes within project area	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	2005	Headwaters CCS Project, OHV Grants
Install buck and rail fence to physically exclude the entire Ammonite site to motorized use.	ACECs	Wolford Mt North Sub-Area	2005	2005	1220 Rec, Volunteers, FO Staff
Begin cultural site surveys in Wolford Mt West Sub-Area; begin baseline impact documentation for 51 known sites; construct buck & pole fence around site 5GA2173; coordinate w/Grand Co Road & Bridge.	Cultural	Wolford Mt West Sub-Area	2005	Annually	BPS Flex Funding
Coordinate projects with KFO Weed Program Coordinator to ensure all equipment is cleaned and inspected prior to use in project area.	Invasive, Non-Native Species	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1020 Range
Follow Programmatic Agreement whenever Native American Religious sites are discovered.	Native American Religious Concerns	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1220 Rec
Sign and begin reclamation, where applicable, on 9.2 miles of specified routes.	T&E Species (<i>Astragalus osterhoutii</i>)	Approximate to plant populations	2005	Annually until completed	BPS Flex
Sign and begin reclamation, where applicable, on 19.4 miles of specified routes.	Sensitive Species (<i>Greater sage-grouse</i>)	Approximate to leks	2005	Annually until completed	2004 BLM Carry-Over, 1220 Rec
Clean up old shooting range and begin planning, coordination and development of agreements with local clubs and agencies to establish a replacement range.	Recreation & Hazardous Waste	Wolford Mt South	2005 (Begin Planning & Agreements)	2006 (Complete Cleanup and Begin Construction of New Site)	2006 BPS Special Cleanup Project, BPS Flex, 1640, Volunteers
Noise Training and Testing Workshop	Noise	Grand County Fairgrounds	2005	Annually	1220 Rec
Conduct weekly patrols	Law Enforcement & All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1220 Rec
Install, maintain, replace signs	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1220 Rec, BPS Flex

Implementation Action	Benefitting Resource Program(s)	Location	Scheduled	Completed	Fund Source
Shape, scarify & seed routes designated for closure and reclamation. Higher priority reclamation is based on: route-related sediment and impacts to water quality and aquatic wildlife; impacts to cultural and paleontological resources; impacts to TES species; and impacts to terrestrial wildlife habitat.	Cultural Resources, Invasive Weeds, Migratory Birds, Paleontology, Range Management, Soils, TE&S, Vegetation, Water Quality, Wildlife, Wetlands & Riparian Zones	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually until completed	Headwaters CCS Project, BPS Flex, Volunteers
Install buck and rail fence @ 3 locations on CR 22	Paleontology	Wolford Mountain South	2005	2005	Volunteers, 1220 Rec, FO Staff
Install buck and rail fence @ additional locations as sites are surveyed and documented.	Paleontology	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually until completed	Volunteers, 1220 Rec, FO Staff
Issue letters to right-of-way holders requiring prior coordination of access with field office during winter closure periods.	Access and Realty Authorizations	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	2005	1430 Lands
Conduct public education and information workshop	All Resource Programs	East & West Grand Schools and Grand County Fairgrounds	2005	Annually	1220 Rec
Develop and implement volunteer agreements with groups and individuals to provide assistance in route monitoring, operation and maintenance, and construction or reconstruction.	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1220 Rec
Document road & trail standards & develop permanent management objectives for operation and maintenance of project area route system	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	2006	Headwaters CCS Project, 1220 Rec, 2823/2824 Fire
Conduct annual maintenance & rehabilitation of 10 miles of routes (combination of roads, single-track, and ATV trails)	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	Deferred Mtnce, BPS Flex, TEA-21, OHV Grants
Relocate & construct single-track motorcycle route around private inholding atop Wolford Mt	Recreation	Wolford Mt West	2005 (Begin Relocation Work)	2006 (Complete Relocation Work & Begin Construction)	BPS Flex Funds, OHV Grants

Implementation Action	Benefitting Resource Program(s)	Location	Scheduled	Completed	Fund Source
Conduct surveys of proposed route relocations to determine migratory bird use prior to establishing final locations.	Migratory Birds	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	2006	1110 Wildlife
Contract w/Colorado Natural Heritage Program to conduct wetland inventory to collect biologic and vegetative information	Wetlands & Riparian, TES (Greater sage-grouse)	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually until completed	1040 Riparian
Install, maintain, replace signs	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1220 Rec, BPS Flex
Install new "Please Close Gate" signs at pass-through gates on range allotments.	Range Management	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	2005	1020 Range, Headwaters CCS Project
Develop maps and brochures of designated routes	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	2006	Headwaters CCS Project, OHV Grants
Update/replace maps & brochures	All Resource Programs	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually	1220 Rec, BPS Flex, OHV Grants
Contract w/Colorado Natural Heritage Program to conduct wetland inventory to collect biologic and vegetative information	Wetlands & Riparian, TES (Greater sage-grouse)	Wolford Mt Project Area	2005	Annually until completed	1040 Riparian

ATTACHMENT B

Changes to Proposed Action Route Designations

Route ID	Length	Designation in Proposed Action	Change to:	Reasons for Change in Designation
WN0036	.20	Open-Limited	Administrative	Minimal use along fenceline and to private property; main route goes diagonal away from the fenceline.
WN0028	.77	Open-Limited	Closed	Route is already vegged in well & receives very little if any motorized use; parallel to CR25; no significant recreation value.
WW0044	.77	Closed	Open-Limited	Access to camping in timber, hunting access, decent road condition. Was closed because another road exists to the east. Provides additional camping opportunities.
WN0108	.4	Open-Limited	Closed	MC trail with little use, highmarking trail loop, no recreational value, & difficult to find.
WN0004a WN0003	.23 .23	Closed Administrative	Administrative Closed	Swap these two – WN0004a provides much better access to tank; WN0003 goes down steep hill following pipeline and really doesn't exist on the steep part of the hill as the pipeline is laid on the surface in the steep part.
WN0043	.71	Open-Limited	Administrative	Continued public use could impact cultural resources; however road is needed for admin purposes. Admin use is expected to be minimal.
WN0056	.29	Closed	Administrative	Access to RAWS weather site
WS0228	1.06	Open-Limited	State	State Land Board does not want this route to remain open for public use – doesn't provide BLM access except to corner of BLM.